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SUBJECT: SEEKING UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF JAPAN-KOREA EEZ TALKS

REF: SECSTATE 91785

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JOSEPH R. DONOVAN. REASONS: 1.4
(b),(d)

¶1. (C) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Northeast Asia Division Deputy Director Yo Takaba responded to reftel points on June 9 by stating that the June 12-13 resumption of Japan-ROK EEZ negotiations is, in itself, a very significant development given the air of crisis that existed between the two countries during the maritime survey dispute in April. MOFA Director General for International Legal Affairs Ichiro Komatsu will head the Japanese negotiating team. The deputy on the delegation will be MOFA Asia and Oceanian Affairs Deputy Director General Kunio Umeda. The Foreign Ministry decided to give Komatsu the lead in order to stress a "cool-headed," "legal," "non-politicized" approach to resolving the problem, Takaba explained.

¶2. (C) The main concern of the Japanese government going into the talks is determining the basis for demarcation of the EEZ, or "how to draw the line," Takaba said. Japan would like to maintain an agreement reached during the 1996 summit meeting between then-Prime Minister Hashimoto and then-ROK President Kim Yong-sam to delink the EEZ negotiations from the territorial dispute over the Liancourt Rocks. The Japanese government is concerned that the ROK negotiators may link the two issues and propose that the mid-line be drawn in South Korea's favor between Japan's Oki island and the Liancourt Rocks. "That would be a disaster," Takaba exclaimed, "and a clear violation of the previous Hashimoto-Kim agreement."

¶3. (C) A second major concern of the Japanese government involves how to proceed with the maritime mapping issue. Even if Japan succeeds in starting genuine negotiations on the EEZ in June, they will take a long time to complete. Takaba said that while MOFA is "quite confident" the ROK will not put forward its controversial undersea naming proposal this year, it could do so next year, sparking another crisis. To keep that from happening, Japanese negotiators are likely to propose a provisional framework that would allow for both

sides to conduct scientific research within the disputed EEZ,
until such time as they agree to a final mid-line, Takaba
informed.
SCHIEFFER